

ANNUAL REPORT TEEN COURT FY 2001-2002

Since assuming the responsibility for statewide coordination during FY 1999-2000, the Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (DJJDP) Teen Court Programs have expanded from 23 to 32. Over 1,800 first time juvenile offenders were required to perform thousands of hours of community service, engage hundreds of student peer-volunteers and account for significant monetary restitution to victims. This report will update the progress of the Teen Court initiative in North Carolina and present statistical documentation of services focusing primarily on the 2001-2002 fiscal year.

Historical Overview

Legislative support for Teen Court began during the 1993 Session of the North Carolina General Assembly (Session Laws, Chapter 561, Section 89). Pursuant to this legislation, the Cumberland County Depute Resolution Center received funding through the Administrative Office of the Courts to implement a Teen Court Program for the 12th Judicial District. Funding was expanded during the special legislative session the following spring (1993 Session Laws, Extra Session 1994, Chapter 24, Section 40). The \$75,000 appropriation that the AOC received at that time allowed for the continued funding of the program in Cumberland County, as well as the establishment of new programs in Buncombe and Durham Counties.

In the 1996-1997, funding for a program in Rockingham County was added to the AOC budget. In the 1997 Session (Chapter 443, Section 18.24) the General Assembly provided funding to establish new Teen Court Programs in: Orange, Columbus, Brunswick, Forsyth, Cabarrus and Wake Counties. The 1998 Session (Chapter 212, Section 16.4) provided additional funds to expand Teen Courts into Duplin, Onslow, and Guilford Counties.

As a part of the comprehensive Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 1999 the General Assembly (House Bill 168) authorized the establishment of the position of Statewide Teen Court Coordinator within the newly formed Office of Juvenile Justice to provide technical assistance to support and expand the Teen Court Program.

The Teen Court Model

Teen Court is a juvenile justice diversion program established to meet one of two objectives. 1) Teen Courts can be a community resource to be used for juveniles who commit offenses that are within the jurisdiction of the juvenile court. Each program receiving State support must, in coordination with the Chief District Court Judge and Chief Court Counselor, identify the types of offenses that are appropriate for referral to the Teen Court Program. Juveniles may be referred to the Teen Court by a law enforcement officer, a juvenile court intake counselor, judge, or by the District Attorney's Office. 2) Teen Courts may also serve as disciplinary alternatives for problems arising within public school. In this role they can serve as a diversion to reduce the number of minor school discipline cases from being brought to the courts attention.

In the typical Teen Court mode, cases are heard and sentences are imposed on juvenile offenders by a jury of their peers. Usually the juveniles referred are first offenders charged with misdemeanor offenses to which they have already admitted guilt. Although most juveniles referred to Teen Court are under the age of 16 when they commit their offense, some cases are heard on referral from Adult

District Court. At the Teen Court session, student volunteers play the roles, i.e. defense attorney, prosecuting attorney, bailiff, clerk, and jurors. During the actual sessions, only the Judge is an adult, usually a sitting or retired judge or an attorney who has been trained as a Teen Court judge.

Once a jury has listened to the defendant's story and heard arguments by both attorneys, jury members retire to consider the appropriate constructive sentence. Sentences imposed by teen juries must fall within the guidelines that have been established with the concurrence of the court and the District Attorney's Office. Sentences may include community service work, the requirement to serve on a number of future Teen Court juries, attendance at educational seminars, attendance at behavioral counseling sessions or payment of monetary restitution (up to established limits). Defendants may also be subject to curfews, required to write letters of apology or other rehabilitative measures as deemed appropriate by the jury or imposed by the judge.

Each Teen Court Program must have the endorsement of the Chief District Court Judge, Chief Court Counselor, and District Attorney's Office within the judicial district to be served by the program. Teen Court Programs are required to report annually to the Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention on the expenditure of funds, the operations of the programs, and on relevant statistical data.

TEEN COURT ASSOCIATION

In an effort to provide ongoing support for Teen Court programs and to maintain a vehicle for the continued professional growth of Teen Court Coordinators and quality programs, a statewide Teen Court Association was formed in 1999 and the mission statement is: "As members of the North Carolina Teen Court Association, we will work together to promote, encourage, and support the development and improvement of Teen Court programs across North Carolina. Our goals are to reduce the number of delinquent youth, provide law-related education, allow the Juvenile Court system to concentrate their efforts on more serious offenders, and demonstrate the effectiveness of Teen Court as a crime prevention and intervention strategy."

The Summit was held on February 22-24, 2002 at Camp Thunderbird (outside of Charlotte) with the technical support of the Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and the financial support of Governor's Crime Commission. Approximately 300 youth and Teen Court adult volunteers came together to conduct workshops for youth and conduct mock trial competitions for middle and high school students. Workshops included: peer education, team building, jury and attorney preparation, law enforcement and youth relationships, and youth rights and responsibilities.

TEEN COURT ACTIVITIES

DDJDP continued through the year to support expressed commitment by providing on-going training opportunities for the local Teen Court Coordinators through workshops addressing Management Information System requirements, grant writing, and skill development workshops. One of the training events offered the opportunity to invite Tracy Godwin, Teen Courts Project Manager from the American Probation and Parole Association from Lexington, Kentucky, to come to North Carolina to assist with the first annual Teen Court Program Coordinator Conference. Workshops included topics such as youth rights and responsibilities, recruiting, training, and retaining volunteers, types and benefits of educational seminars and community service, and jury/attorney training.

Impact on Juvenile Court

In addition to the 1862 juvenile defendants admitted for participation in Teen Court last year there were an additional 2763 youth volunteers, as well as 593 adult volunteers who spent time assisting in the implementation of these services. Young people learned about the workings of the court system and were exposed to adult professionals in the judicial system and in law enforcement. The relationships and impressions that were fostered among the defendants as well as the peer volunteers impacted in significant if unmeasured ways the attitudes and behaviors of many of participants in this program.

One measurable impact of the program had is on the potential workload of the juvenile courts in the 32 counties that operated a Teen Court Program during 2001-2002. In these counties 1862 juveniles were diverted into Teen Court. Teen court served as an intake diversion for 603 juveniles. Juvenile court dispositions to Teen court were provided to 100 juveniles.

Teen Court allows the system to respond proactively and compassionately to juveniles at the first instance of problem behavior. It undercuts the permissive message that is often inadvertently sent when minor offenses lead to essentially “no response” from a system over-burdened with more serious business. The combined effect of this “first response” that requires accountability, community services and interaction with victims is laying important groundwork that will reduce the escalation of delinquent behaviors for many of the teens being impacted by this program.

Statistical Comparison

Last years annual report documented the program activities for state fiscal year 2000-2001 on certain critical measures of activity and program impact. Table I examines the growth of the Teen Court Program by comparing the measures from fiscal year 2000-01 to the documentation for fiscal year 2001-2002.

TABLE 1

Measure	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002	Incr/Decr
# of Programs	26	32	32	
Referrals	2,001	2,111	2,173	2.9%
Admissions	1,502	1,709	1,862	9.0%
% of Referrals Served	75%	81%	86%	5.8%

Most Common Offenses:

Affrays (fighting)	16%	16%	16%
Larc./Poss. Stolen Property	15%	21%	19%
Shoplifting	13%	8%	12%
Assault	13%	13%	13%
Drugs & Paraphernalia	9%	9%	8%
Property Damage	6%	6%	4%
Weapon (not firearm)	5%	6%	4%
Misd. B & E	3%	2%	3%
All Others	20%	19%	21%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%

Results Arising from Teen Court Disposition:

Community Service Hours	28,324	27,617	31,704
Restitution Paid	\$5,218	\$11,029	\$4,483
Jury Duties Performed	3,303	4,068	4,634
Educational Seminars	1,032	1,266	1,717
Apology Letters	540	662	955
Essays Written	265	287	480

The clear pattern that emerges from the statistical comparisons in Table I above is one of solid program growth. The number of youth referred increased by over 200 between the last two time frames.

TABLE II TEEN COURT ANNUAL SUMMARY

Teen Court Statewide Report FY 2001-02

1. Referrals received	2,173	a) Not accepted	150
		b) Not screened	115
2. Accepted for participation	1,908		
3. Total number of volunteers	3,356	a) Students	2,763
		b) Adults	593
4. Withdrew before hearing	46		
5. Hearings conducted (admissions)	1,862		
6. Number of completions	1,633		
a) Successful dispositions	1,463		
b) Terminations for non-compliance	170		
7. Dispositions Ordered			
a) Community service hours ordered	34,832		
b) Restitution ordered--in dollars	\$4,345		
c) Jury duties ordered	5,155		
d) Educational seminars ordered	1,929		
e) Apology letters	989		
f) Essays	553		
8. Dispositions Completed			
(successful and unsuccessful terminations)			
a) Community service hours performed	31,704		
b) Restitution paid--in dollars	\$4,483		
c) Jury duties performed	4,634		
d) Educational seminars attended	1,717		
e) Apology letters written	955		
f) Essays Turned In	480		
9. Type of Offense Heard			
(Most serious offense per defendant)			
Assault	247	13%	
Affray	296	16%	
Poss. of weapon (not firearm)	79	4%	
Misd. breaking or entering	51	3%	
Poss. of drugs/paraphernalia	155	8%	
Larceny/poss. of stolen property	343	19%	
Shoplifting/concealment/price switch	224	12%	
Property damage	74	4%	
Poss. of alcohol	47	3%	
Delay/obstruct law enf. officer	13	1%	
Trespassing	39	2%	
Communicating threats	35	2%	
False calls	30	2%	
Disorderly conduct	122	7%	
Driving offense	31	2%	
Truancy	13	1%	
All others (list)	33	2%	
TOTALS	1,832	100%	

10. Referral Source

	Number Referred	Number Admitted	Admns Rate	Success Complete	Complt. Rate
School	28	23	82%	19	83%
SRO	691	579	84%	440	76%
Police	337	260	77%	206	79%
Sheriff	29	23	79%	19	83%
Juvenile Intake	670	603	90%	488	81%
District Attorney	54	39	72%	19	49%
Juvenile Court	115	100	87%	94	94%
District Court	236	230	97%	178	77%
Other	13	5	38%	0	0%
TOTAL	2,173	1,862	86%	1,463	79%

11. Demographics of admitted defendants (1862)

RACE			
Black	White	Hispanic	Other
866	854	57	85
44%	50%	3%	4%

GENDER	
M	F
1,133	729
61%	39%

AGE			
11&under	12 & 13	14 & 15	16 - 18
88	476	889	255
4%	28%	53%	15%

12. Sources of financial support FY 2001-2002

County	\$JCPC	\$DJJDP	\$LOCAL	\$IN-KIND	OTHER	TOTAL
Alamance	\$28,810		\$7,743	\$900		\$37,453
Bladen	\$36,865	\$30,000	\$12,214	\$17,861		\$96,940
Brunswick	\$17,694	\$20,000		\$18,900		\$56,594
Buncombe	\$19,006	\$25,000		\$5,850		\$49,856
Cabarrus	\$26,980	\$14,330	\$8,094	\$58,848	\$24,175	\$132,427
Caldwell	\$18,440			\$12,516		\$30,956
Carteret	\$47,545			\$14,294		\$61,839
Chatham		\$25,000			\$5,000	\$30,000
Columbus	\$5,700	\$20,000	\$8,280			\$33,980
Cumberland	\$23,220	\$30,000	\$3,885	\$759	\$61,620	\$119,484
Davidson	\$15,000	\$30,000	\$1,000	\$8,340		\$54,340
Duplin		\$20,000	\$14,138	\$6,000	\$14,063	\$54,201
Durham	\$103,100	\$70,000	\$35,000	\$62,020	\$36,964	\$307,084
Forsyth	\$21,000	\$14,330	\$30,013	\$10,000		\$75,343
Guilford	\$7,036	\$20,000	\$9,000	\$400	\$40,882	\$77,318
Hoke	\$67,151		\$1,959	\$15,538	\$15,000	\$99,648
Jones		\$30,000		\$19,710		\$49,710
Mecklenburg			\$42,000			\$42,000
Moore	\$34,612		\$4,744	\$7,440		\$46,796
New Hanover		\$30,000				\$30,000
Onslow	\$1,200	\$20,000		\$912		\$22,112
Orange		\$40,000		\$16,296		\$56,296
Pender					\$46,000	\$46,000
Pitt	\$20,000		\$5,000	\$5,100	\$25,000	\$55,100
Randolph	\$45,380		\$2,447	\$17,305		\$65,132
Robeson	\$6,701		\$80,000		\$7,500	\$94,201
Rockingham		\$25,000	\$674			\$25,674
Rowan	\$30,759		\$3,891	\$5,860		\$40,510
Sampson	\$38,444			\$5,390		\$43,834
Scotland	\$30,185		\$6,975	\$4,421		\$41,581
Wake	\$38,705	\$25,000	\$11,614			\$75,319
Wayne	\$32,410		\$6,362	\$3,220		\$41,992
TOTAL	\$715,943	\$488,660	\$295,033	\$317,880	\$276,204	\$2,093,720

The Teen Court programs received a reduced amount of funds (\$407,219) due to budget crisis requirements in FY 2001-2002.